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ABSTRACT

This paper is one component of the National Commission for Employment Policy's current project on at-risk youth aged 9-15 years old. It examines and discusses current issues, legislation, and action being taken regarding educational programs that assist this at-risk population about to enter the school-to-work transition. The paper also analyzes the school's role in this process. The unique educational needs of these youth and the educational problems they encounter are also studied. Current federal legislation that directly affects the educational welfare of this target population and legislative changes considered in the 100th Congress are reviewed. The paper concludes with a call for youth at risk to be considered a priority in the design of first-chance programs, primarily those outlined within the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act considered in the 100th Congress. (27 references) (KC)

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LEAVE NONE BEHIND — YOUTH-AT-RISK.

AGE 9-15

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PREFACE

This paper serves as one among multiple components of the National Commission for Employment Policy's current project entitled "Broadening the Employability Options for Economically and Educationally Disadvantaged Youth-at-Risk. Age 9-15." Its purpose is to examine and discuss current issues, legislation and action being taken regarding education programs that assist this at-risk population about to enter the school to work transition and to analyze the school's role in this process. The unique educational needs of these youth will also be examined as well as the educational problems they encounter. This paper also examines current Federal legislation that directly affects the educational welfare of this target population and reviews proposed changes and new initiatives under consideration in the 100th Congress.

INTRODUCTION

In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education released a report titled, A Nation At Risk, which stated that the quality of public education in this nation was in a state of crisis. The Commission reported that the declining quality of public education resulted in a population of students ill-equipped with basic skills, inadequately prepared for successful college experiences, and poorly trained for a changing and complex workforce. That population was identified, in their report, as those students who are "at-risk". For the purpose of this paper, the National Commission for Employment Policy (NCEP) is further defining this population. **At-risk 9 to 15 year olds are those who are economically and educationally disadvantaged, are at-risk of dropping out of school and not securing sustained employment.**

The parameters available to define this population are limited, at best. Due to vague definitions and lack of adequate targeting on specific and well defined groups of at-risk youth, some individuals may not have access to equal educational opportunities.

The focus of this paper will revolve around those who are not being served and who lack the resources to acquire the basic skills necessary for successful school experiences and eventual employment. Who are these youth-at-risk?

YOUTH-AT-RISK: DEFINED

As stated, this paper defines youth-at-risk as those who may eventually drop out of school thus impeding their chances of successful employment. Included are children who are from economically disadvantaged families and those who fall behind their age-mates in academic achievement. These youth are significantly more likely to drop out of school compared to those from more advantaged backgrounds.

An examination of the High School and Beyond data (Barro, 1984) suggests that children living in poverty are three times more likely to drop out of school. Fewer students from poor inner-city and rural communities complete school compared to those from more advantaged areas. In Detroit, Chicago, and New York City, for example, only 33.5 percent, 43.5 percent, and 56 percent respectively complete high school (NGA, 1987). Only 30 percent of poor students from the rural southern Appalachian region of the country graduate from high school (Campbell Communications, 1987).

A lack of adequate basic skills is a predictor of both school failure and dropping out. Youth who fall behind in academic achievement or those who have been retained one or more years in a particular grade-level are more likely to drop out of school in later years than youth who continue to experience on grade-level achievement (Borus and Carpenter, 1984).

These youth who come from impoverished environments are frequently behind their normal chronological age-mates in their acquisition and mastery of basic skills. They are likely to continue unsuccessful school experiences. Consequently, they face the real potential of entering the employment market unskilled and unprepared. Poverty, inadequate educational achievement and youth unemployment are interrelated (A. Hahn, J. Danzberger, B. Lefkowitz, 1987).

FEDERAL EFFORTS WHICH PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO YOUTH-AT-RISK

Concern for the future prospects of youth-at-risk has led to marshalling of resources through a number of Federal programs targeted at youth from economically disadvantaged families. The educational needs of the very young are addressed by Headstart, provisions of Chapter 1 of the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA), and other preschool programs. Other provisions of Chapter 1 serve primary age children, ages 5 to 8. Dropout prevention initiatives and employment and training programs are designed to serve the high school at-risk population. However, few if any educational initiatives, policies or programs acknowledge or offer assistance to those currently in middle or junior high schools. To some extent these programs do assist youth ages 9 to 15. The extent to which they target and assist this population will be examined.

Federal legislation which mandates resources for early childhood assistance has proven to be effective for children at their earliest stage of development. Yet, lack of appropriate follow through may cause any early remedial efforts to become lost. Middle school youth are left behind as a result of too little resources available to meet established goals. More attention must be focused on directing the necessary resources to aid this group so that they do not fall further behind.

"YOUTH-AT-RISK", AGE 9 to 15 — A PRIME TARGET GROUP FOR SPECIAL INTERVENTION

Nine to fifteen year old at-risk youth should be viewed as a prime target group for special concern. This target population is eligible for only a limited number of Federal programs. As stated earlier, they are the

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"not yet addressed group". Even though Headstart and Chapter 1 programs precede this group of youth-at-risk, many still do experience difficulty later in school. Between the ages of 9 to 13 youth-at-risk are attempting to go beyond "learning the basics" to the application stage of learning which entails "applying the learned skills within varying contexts." "Learning the basics" is essential. This stage of learning offers youth-at-risk the opportunity to acquire various bodies of knowledge, skills, and attitudes which are necessary prerequisites for future employment.

Age nine is generally viewed as the beginning of the literacy transition that extends through age 15. A positive transition is necessary for successful adult social, personal, and employment experiences (Chall, 1983). Typically, students move from the stage of learning to learn/read/complete basic computations to reading to learn, learning to compute and reason in ways which allow them to better understand and interpret the world around them. In addition, this successful transition allows them to responsibly make choices regarding how they will conduct themselves in multiple and varying environments.

Youth-at-risk at age nine frequently have delayed growth in language, knowledge, cognition and possess delayed decoding and fluency skills (initial reading skills). This is due, in part, to poor prior development of decoding and fluency skills which normally develop in the primary elementary school grades. In addition, they lack stimulating environments and appropriate role models which promote normal language development. Environmental factors additionally have a negative impact on this target populations' cognitive capacities. These youth lack knowledge of the purpose and value of learning. They often have few if any adult role models in their home environments who emphasize the need for or value of achieving a basic skill level to improve employability.

These youth have educational problems that follow one of two tracks. On one hand, many of those with potential who attend school do not achieve the mastery of basic skills of reading, writing, computing, and solving problems. As a result, they progress through the regular twelve school-centered years ill-prepared to secure gainful employment. On the other hand, many youth-at-risk choose to drop out of school, mortgaging their opportunity to achieve mastery of the basic skills necessary for eventual employment (A. Paterson, 1986).

Unremediated at-risk youth, age 9 to 15, are prospects for encountering problems in adulthood. They may experience unemployment and poverty as adults facing a lifetime filled with limited choices, significantly reducing their employment options.

Unprepared, this population presents a potential burden to the future economic state of this Nation. Recognizing this problem, it is important to examine the role of the school to determine how these youth are being served.

THE SCHOOL'S ROLE IN THE TRANSITIONAL PROCESS - SCHOOL TO WORK

Schools play a large role in the students' transition from the typical vocational environment to the work environment. Prior to entering the world of work, students must acquire basic skills, appropriate work attitudes including self-discipline, responsibility, dependability, and possibly some specialized knowledge or job skills. At various stages of their school experience, these skills, attitudes, and general or specialized areas of knowledge are learned which allow them to advance successfully from a school environment to a work environment (Chall, 1983).

Some view the transitional period between school and world of work as encompassing the later two years of high school. Due to the population of "drop out" students exiting high school prior to grade 11, others view all four years of high school as the transitional period of time prior to entering the workforce. Others--those taking a developmental perspective of this phenomena--perceive the transitional period as one which encompasses the entire school experience from preschool or kindergarten through grade twelve (Chall, 1983). To some extent, the view of the transitional period adopted affects the program design and delivery of services offered to youth as they prepare to enter adulthood and the world of work.

Efforts exerted toward school to work transition programs require numerous steps. A transitional program based on the extended developmental perspective as described above would approach program design and service delivery in the following manner. First, an identification of those skills, attitudes and areas of knowledge that are required prerequisites to work would be outlined. Second, the developmental sequence of when these skills are learned and subsequently mastered along a developmental continuum would be chronologically ordered. This information can then be applied toward determining whether youth are on grade level achievers, in regard to their acquisition of skills and so forth or whether they are at-risk. This procedure makes it possible to assess whether achievement is in line with their potential within given time-frames.

For those involved in the educational process of youth, this background knowledge focuses attention toward early learning difficulties of youth, as opposed to later identification of surmounting difficulties which are more difficult to remedy. Although learning difficulties occur at all stages of learning, youth beginning at age nine often demonstrate a common point of weakness in developing skills, indicating a need for assistance in the learning process. It is these youth, age 9 to 15, who are at risk, but not yet in crisis. It is this target population for which appropriate intervention has an improved chance of success

rather than focusing on youth 16 years of age and older.

THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS OF SCHOOLING -- PREREQUISITE ACQUISITIONS TO THE WORLD OF WORK

A recent sampling of 4078 employers noted the following skills, attitudes and knowledge bases as important qualifications for entry level workers to secure and maintain employment:

1. Basic Literacy
2. Advanced Readers
3. Basic Math
4. Excellent Math Skills
5. Specialized Knowledge
6. Proper Attitudes
7. Dependable
8. Good Judgment
9. Methodical
10. Quick Learner
11. Growth Potential
12. Manual Dexterity
13. Permanence
14. Good Team Member
15. Client Relations
16. Can Supervise

(Conference Board, 1986)

These traits continue to develop throughout the high school years. However, the development of these job traits or lack thereof, can be traced back to the initial school years as well as the early years in the home. Data obtained from teacher interviews and longitudinal studies has shown that the problems that youth-at-risk demonstrate in later life (junior high and high school) were also noted earlier, especially in their elementary and middle school years.

The learning and application of basic skills and pre-employment job traits are a part of the entire schooling process. Many who enter adulthood continue to learn and gain greater mastery of these skills. In assisting youth in acquiring these skills, it is necessary to carefully evaluate, plan, and execute instruction targeted toward their deficiencies. Long range employment options must be foremost in the minds of those responsible for the education of this population. Educators, school administrators, and policymakers need to be informed of the short and long range issues that affect youth-at-risk throughout the transitional process. Awareness and action together will improve the present and future employment prospects of these youth.

STAGES OF SCHOOLING AND THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY YOUTH-AT-RISK

Learning, a sequential process, is dependent on and evolves as a result of the interaction of student, task, and environmental or contextual attributes (Chall, 1983; P. Johnston, 1985). In a building block, step by step process, students gain various skills, attitudes, and bodies of knowledge. Over time these abilities contribute to their employability. In the process of schooling, students move through various stages in which they acquire these traits (Chall, 1983).

STAGE ONE The first learning stage (grades 1-2, ages 6-7) within the formal schooling process involves the initial development of the basic skills of reading, writing, and computing as well as applying these basics to simple problems. During this stage of acquiring basic reading skills, children learn the alphabet and begin to associate letters with parts of language. Readers at this stage are "glued" to print, that is, they have to decode words into their phonetic units. They learn to apply these skills toward both reading and writing simple passages. In addition, they learn to manipulate the concept of quantity and are able to solve simple math problems through basic computations.

STAGE TWO The confirmation and fluency stage (grades 2-3, ages 7-8) of learning requires students to incorporate skills learned in stage one with that which is familiar and known. Students at this stage apply simple skills gained in stage one within familiar contexts. These practices allow students the opportunity to gain a sense of greater familiarity with the application of basic skills. Over time, word recognition becomes fluent which allows the reader to become 'unglued' from print. Less manipulation of objects is necessary for students to complete varying types of one-dimensional computation of quantities within a shorter time. Their greater familiarity of these skills, applied in different contexts, leads to an increased ease of learning.

STAGE THREE Applying the basic skills for learning the new, (grades 4-8, ages 9-13), is the stage at which children become able to apply basic skills with a greater degree of mastery. This allows them to learn about new ideas and concepts, as opposed to applying skills which were familiar in stage two. In addition to learning how to read, write, compute and apply these skills to new problem-solving situations, students are learning about new and varied areas of knowledge over a wide range of subjects.

STAGE FOUR At this stage, (high school, ages 14-18) the learning process requires dealing with numerous theories and viewpoints. The learner's task is to compare and contrast these ideas, which allows for learning of more difficult concepts and the acquisition and integration of new points of view into one's existing schema.

STAGE FIVE It is at this stage, (college, ages 18 and above) that selective learning occurs, such that a student takes in as much or as little of the information as is deemed necessary. At this stage the student is aware of what needs to be learned in varying contexts, for varying reasons. In addition, the student learns to decipher what is irrelevant within certain contexts.

As students progress from one stage to the next, they utilize skills acquired at previous levels in a manner that allows them to continue learning tasks of increasing difficulty. Youth-at-risk demonstrate performance inferior to that of skilled students. Inferior performance is due, in part, to a lack of subskill development (assumed to have been acquired previously) which prohibits them from achieving the expected levels of proficiency within varying subject matters i.e. science, social studies, English, and other subject areas.

Difficulties experienced throughout the "stages of schooling" often lead to a sense of "learned helplessness," in which the learner believes that failure is inevitable. The learner cultivates a belief that all external variables are responsible for his or her lack of success. Youth who develop these attitudes often do not learn to be responsible and/or dependable. Their judgment about themselves and the world they live in is often jaded. Because of their attitudes, they do not develop leadership or appropriate social skills. As stated, the failure to acquire basic reading, writing, computing and problem solving skills can have a most negative and profound adverse affect on these youth which only worsens unless PROMPT and REMEDIAL efforts are taken.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES WHICH NEED TO BE ADDRESSED TOWARD ASSISTING YOUTH-AT-RISK, AGE 9 TO 15

To some extent schools are viewed as a vehicle to sort students rather than an institution to teach them. Evidence of this claim is seen in the practice of categorizing educationally disadvantaged students. They are often targeted as the slow learners, underachievers, and/or those most difficult to assist. The homogeneous grouping arrangements of underachievers does not address the individual needs of students within the groups, but rather marshalls all within these groups through the same curricula, using the same instructional approaches, materials, and assessment strategies. Little if any recognition is given to the individual differences among these students.

Teacher shortages, and the lack of qualified teachers, have become current educational issues. These factors greatly affect the quality of education offered to students, including youth-at-risk of all ages. A recent survey (NEA, 1987) showed that the search for qualified teachers is becoming increasingly difficult. The National Education Association reported that there are approximately 34,800 unfilled teaching positions for the 1987-88 academic year as compared to the 32,000 vacancies reported the previous year. These projections suggest that the national teacher shortage will increase fourfold by 1992.

In addition to teacher shortages, educators presently contracted to provide instruction are often ill-prepared. Many have difficulty identifying potentially at-risk students. Teachers are often faced with high class enrollments which limit their ability to adequately attend to students that exhibit learning difficulties. To a great extent, the curricula shows little if any long range consideration of the importance of including a career development component intertwined throughout the school curricula.

The issue of funding also requires examination when considering education programs for this target group. Educating youth requires monetary resources to support participation and coordination. Less than fifty percent of eligible Chapter 1 students are receiving services enabling them to achieve at levels commensurate with their potential. Increasing and/or enhancing services to those in the 9 to 15 year old target group could involve additional funding or better targeting of available funds to support the needed increase in instructional staff, teacher training to enhance teachers' abilities to offer effective instruction, additional materials, and technical expertise to assist in coordination of all services.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY YOUTH-AT-RISK, AGE 9 to 15 BEGINNING AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL OF LEADERSHIP

Targeting resources at the needs of youth-at-risk, age 9 to 15, would result in assisting youth where they are more reachable, rather than in second chance—crisis programs for youth, age 16 and older. There is no doubt that some economically and educationally disadvantaged youth, as early as age nine are at risk of not acquiring basic skills and work-related abilities. A more skilled future generation of America's workforce might be forthcoming if the available resources were targeted to better aid this group of youth-at-risk.

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Bridging the gap between youths' potential and achievement becomes possible through such strategies as outlined below. This list is not intended as an exhausted list, but rather a partial direction to address the dilemmas faced by 9 to 15 year old youth-at-risk. They are:

- o concentrated remediation, including individualized instruction;
- o effective school-business collaboration;
- o availability of enriched community experiences;
- o improved incentives to enhance students' motivation toward learning;
- o heightened accountability of the public education system for at-risk children;
- o parenting assistance offered to parents of this youth-at-risk target population;
- o cognitive education utilizing methodology that teaches at-risk-youth to "learn how to learn", value learning, and identify purpose for learning; and
- o the integration of a pre-employment curriculum strand which makes learning across subject matter relevant in a manner which will encourage students to be responsible for their learning toward eventual satisfactory and gainful employment.

CURRENT FEDERAL LEGISLATION TARGETED TOWARD THE DIRECT EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF YOUTH-AT-RISK, AGE 9-15

Many Federal education policies and programs have the potential to directly affect these age 9- to 15-year-olds. It is important to examine what is currently available to this population. This assessment could prove helpful in determining whether the assistance and guidance offered matches the educational needs of these youth. In addition, this action could assist in directing future changes in policies and programs. These changes would contribute to the resources needed to insure that youth-at-risk have a better first chance at aligning their levels of achievement with their potential toward a successful transition from school to work.

Currently, the Federal role in education has been one of providing support for supplementary and compensatory programs, leadership and research funds. The Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 (ECIA) targeted aid to elementary and secondary schools into two main programs, referred to as Chapter 1, the compensatory education program for the educationally disadvantaged and Chapter 2, the educational block grants to the states. Other significant education programs for elementary and secondary schools include impact aid, bilingual education programs, the Vocational Education Act, and other handicapped education programs.

Brief descriptions of current Federal programs that are targeted toward providing assistance and resources for the education of some segments of the population are discussed below. Following each description, a brief statement is made in reference to how these programs address the education issues which impact youth-at-risk.

Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981, is designed to provide financial assistance through the state and local educational agencies for the purpose of offering compensatory educational services to disadvantaged students. In addition, Chapter 1 provides financial assistance to State Educational Agencies (SEA's) for special educational services for handicapped children in state operated programs, for neglected and delinquent children under state care, and for special educational services for children of migratory workers. An educationally deprived child is defined as one who needs help to perform at his/her grade level. The number of children living in poverty determines eligibility of a school district for Chapter 1 Federal financial resources. However, on an individual basis, educational deprivation is the sole criterion for participation in Chapter 1 programs. Any educationally deprived child not over 21 years of age who is eligible to attend an elementary or secondary school serving an eligible attendance area may receive Chapter 1 services. Funds are made available to State Educational Agencies (SEA's) and Local Educational Agencies (LEA's) via a statutory formula which considers, state by state, the per-pupil expenditures needed for educational purposes, and the enrollment of eligible students throughout each SEA.

Youth at-risk, age 9-15 who are educationally deprived are to be directly served through Chapter 1 assistance. Services offered to educationally deprived children are as follows:

- o remedial instruction in reading, language arts, and mathematics to upgrade the achievement levels of children who are below grade level in these subjects;
- o additional teachers and teachers aides as needed to provide more individualized instruction;
- o summer programs for Chapter 1 students; and
- o inservice training for teachers, aides, and parents.

It has been determined that approximately 40 percent of the current eligible population of at-risk youth are served. Surveys completed by the U.S. Department of Education indicate that of the 40 percent served, 70 percent of Chapter 1 funds serve students in grades 1-8. It appears that a greater portion of the 9- to 13-year-old at-risk population is currently being served as compared to the 14 to 15 year old segment of the same target group.

Other programs offered under the umbrella of Chapter 1 which have the potential to serve some segments of the 9 to 15 year old population of youth-at-risk are:

- o **Programs for Handicapped Children**, P.L. 93-380, authorizes grants to State Educational Agencies which are directly responsible for providing free public education for handicapped children. Schools for handicapped children operated or supported by the State agencies, including schools under contractual arrangement with State agencies, are eligible for financial support on a per pupil percentage basis for grant allocations.

- o **Programs for Migratory Children**, P.L. 93-380, authorizes grants to State Educational Agencies (SEA's) for special programs for meeting the needs of children of migratory workers. These

programs have evolved as a result of the great influx of migrant workers in this country. Their children have special needs as a result of their mobility — they are difficult to find and serve. In addition, they often do not speak English and have achievement levels far below their expected levels.

- o **Programs for Neglected and Delinquent Children**, P.L. 93-380, offers assistance to youth residing in State-supported orphanages or similar institutions for neglected children, detention centers for juvenile delinquents, and correctional institutions, if youth are under the age of 21. This program is targeted at providing supplementary educational services to this group of disadvantaged youth.

Chapter 2 of the Education Consolidation Improvement Act of 1981 is intended to provide State and Local educational agencies with Federal funds, offering a maximum degree of flexibility and requiring a minimum amount of paper work. Chapter 2 Block Grant programs are designed to provide financial assistance for the general improvement and excellence of the quality of education at both the elementary and secondary levels of schooling. Chapter 2 consolidated approximately 40 previous education programs into a single block grant to the states. Amendments since 1981 have retained or created several categorical programs. Per pupil population within states and adjusted cost of their education determines awards granted to State Educational Agencies (SEA).

TITLE II of the Education for Economic Security Act, P.L. 98-377, commonly known as the mathematics and science education program, was created in 1984 in response to the widespread concern over the quality of math and science education in this country. This program provides for the upgrading of teachers' skills toward improved teaching of the subjects of math and science. certification of math and science teachers, the purchasing of needed equipment, and the development of higher levels of math and science classes. foreign language and computer instruction.

The mathematics and science education program has the potential to directly assist youth-at-risk, age 9 to 15. Provisions targeted toward improved instructional methods, better classroom materials, and for the development of alternative science and math programs would assist in meeting the educational needs of 9 to 15 year old youth-at-risk. In Addition, this Act, as it is intended, offers assistance to improve the skills of teachers toward meeting the educational needs of these students.

Anti Drug Abuse Act of 1986, Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986, Title IV, Subtitle B, P.L. 99-570, authorizes a variety of alcohol and drug abuse prevention programs. This legislation provides assistance for the planning, implementation, and administration of the following: local broad-based programs for drug and alcohol prevention; early intervention, rehabilitation referrals, and education for all age groups; drug abuse education for teachers, counselors, parents, and other public service personnel; the development and distribution of educational and informational materials to provide public information concerning drug abuse and a drug-free society; technical assistance to aid in the development of these activities; and coordination of drug abuse education and prevention programs with related community resources and activities. The Anti Drug Abuse Act authorizes the

United States Department of Education to provide grants to SEA's and LEA's to plan and implement school-based programs for prevention of drug abuse.

All needs of youth-at-risk (physical, emotional, educational, and psychological) are addressed in this legislation. This legislation has the potential to offer to youth, age 9 to 15, information and warnings regarding the consequences of drug consumption. This target population may be at greatest risk for consumption of drugs as a result of environmental models, peer pressure, and misinformation. Although this legislation may not aid in the direct assistance of improved achievement in the basic skills and acquisition of appropriate work-related abilities, their efforts may keep the target population from abusing drugs.

Bilingual Education, Title VII, P.L. 95-561, provides funding for the development, implementation, and training needs of students with limited English proficiency. In addition, technical assistance grants are provided to improve the educational opportunity of limited English proficient students. For the subpopulation of 9 to 15 year olds who are non-English speaking, these programs offer an opportunity to both proceed with the acquisition of basic skill development and work related aptitudes, in conjuction with instruction in the English language.

Indian Education Act (1972), P.L. 92-318, provides assistance to develop and improve Indian education programs operated within the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. These programs are directly intended to assist in meeting both the educational and cultural needs of school-age Indian children and in the overall quality of educational programs targeted for the subpopulation under consideration.

Impact Aid, P.L. 81-874, was passed in 1950 and is intended to fulfill the Federal government's obligation to reimburse public school districts for their inability to generate revenue due to the nontaxable presence of Federal property. (School systems generate their funding for the basic operation and maintenance of their school system from taxes.) School systems that serve children who reside in Federally owned property—military, civilian, Indian, and low-rent housing-- have the financial obligation of educating these children without the assistance that is generally accompanied by local tax levy payments. This program has the potential to assist school districts that serve at-risk-youth. Where school districts have sufficient funds to design and maintain their facilities, they then do not have to compromise other budgeting concerns for this purpose and can target financial resources.

Magnet Schools Assistance Program, Title VII of the Education for Economic Security Act, P.L. 98-377, supports specific educational activities in magnet schools or school districts implementing desegregation plans. A magnet school is defined as a school or education center providing a special curriculum intended to be attractive to substantial numbers of students of different races. This program has the potential to assist in the educational service offered to 9 to 15 year old at-risk youth in the following ways: recognizing the heterogeneous nature of different sub-populations of youth of different races; providing for individual and subject-relevant curriculum; and offering a curriculum which would encourage cooperative learning of basic skills and the acquisition of job-related abilities.

Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) Elementary Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title IX, Part C, is to promote educational equity for women and girls in the country and to provide financial assistance to help educational agencies and institutions achieve the nondiscrimination requirements. - The WEEA program supports nondiscriminatory work in preschool, elementary, secondary, vocational, adult, and higher education. This program offers assistance in the development, demonstration, and dissemination of information on women's educational equity programs, materials, and activities of national and state significance. This program has the potential to assist the female sub-population of 9 to 15 year olds by affording appropriate non-discriminatory instructional materials, encouraging appropriate role models within these materials, and providing female youth with examples of adult model figures who successfully participate in employment. A vision of hope is essential for these females at an early age when pursuit and investment in their educational experiences can be encouraged.

Allen J. Ellender Fellowship Program, P.L. 92-506, was authorized as a memorial to the late Senator Allen J. Ellender of Louisiana. Grants are authorized only to the Close-up Foundation for the purpose of increased understanding of the Federal government among secondary students and teachers. Week long seminars, technical assistance to state and local programs, and the production of instructional television programs result from these grants. Federal appropriations are used to provide assistance in offsetting the costs of attending seminars to economically disadvantaged high school students and their teachers. This program offers potential assistance to youth by enriched and intensive instruction regarding the Federal government and knowledge of how to participate in the political system.

Emergency Immigrant Education Act of 1984, P.L. 98-511, provides financial assistance to local school districts that provide education and related services for immigrant children. To be eligible for this assistance, local school districts must have a minimum enrollment of 500 immigrant students, or the population of immigrant students must include a minimum of three percent of the total school population. In addition to target immigrant youth, these programs afford schools with the resources needed to address the instructional needs of this target subpopulation of youth-at-risk, avoiding the problem of forcing schools to compromise other budgetary needs.

Excellence In Education Program, Title VI of Education for Economic Security, P.L. 98-377, provides Federal support for activities in schools that demonstrate techniques for improving educational quality that can be disseminated and replicated among other schools and that involve local parents, principals, teachers, and businesses in their implementation. This program offers the potential to assist in all aspects of the educational needs of students who are at risk.

NEW INITIATIVES

The educational reforms which mandate upgraded curricula, more stringent graduation requirements, and competency and achievement testing have evolved as a result of public concern that this country must offer its students the best educational experiences to ensure a successful economic future. In doing so, concern has been voiced that these initiatives may in fact, not enhance

the opportunity of economically and educationally disadvantaged youth-at-risk, but rather, cause them to be left behind. In response to this concern, the Federal government has recently made the following recommendations to improve the educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth (DOEd, 1986):

- o continue to provide resources through programs such as compensatory education and education for students with limited English proficiency;
- o enact legislation that holds the schools accountable for spending Federal funds effectively and for achieving results;
- o continue to make available the results of research for use by school personnel and the general public;
- o offer reliable information to groups and individuals who work to improve education for disadvantaged children;
- o offer reliable information to groups and individuals who work to improve education for disadvantaged children;
- o establish clear and specific rules regarding drug use that include strong corrective actions;
- o enforce established policies against drug use fairly and consistently;
- o assist schools in fighting drugs by providing expertise and financial resources of community groups and agencies;
- o encourage the community to support and assist the school's antidrug policy and programs work; and
- o implement a comprehensive drug prevention curriculum from kindergarten through grade twelve.

Although these recommendations are targeted toward the general population of disadvantaged youth, they also apply to the more narrowly defined population of youth-at-risk, age 9 to 15. Many of these recommendations have been incorporated in legislation before the 100th Congress toward the reauthorization of various educational bills.

PROPOSED CHANGES AND NEW INITIATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION IN THE 100TH CONGRESS

The Federal government's major elementary and secondary education programs will expire as of September, 1987. Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 3 of the ECIA will be considered for reauthorization in the 100th Congress. Other significant elementary and secondary education school programs will be addressed in an omnibus bill, in order to facilitate the reauthorization process in the future.

As was projected some time ago, the House and Senate Committees have elected to examine the broad sweep of Federal support for education. The Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts, and Humanities has yet to complete its review of these programs. They are in the process of receiving testimony from various individuals in the field. Their version of an education bill is expected by early Fall.

On May 21, 1987 the House of Representatives, passed by a vote of 401 to 1, H.R. 5 (the School Improvement Act), an omnibus bill intended to improve elementary and secondary education by revising the following 14 programs that are to expire in fiscal years 1987, 1988 and 1989.

1. Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA), compensatory education for disadvantaged children (formerly Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act);
2. Chapter 2 of ECIA, elementary and secondary education block grants to States;
3. Title II of the Education for Economic Security Act (EESA), the Mathematics and Science Education Program;
4. The Adult Education Act for adult literacy;
5. The Magnet Schools Assistance program (Title VII of EESA);
6. The Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986;
7. The Women's Educational Equity Act;
8. The Allen J. Ellender Fellowship program;
9. The Emergency Immigrant Education Act;
10. The Territorial Assistance programs for teacher training and for general assistance to the Virgin Islands;
11. The Excellence in Education demonstration grant program (Title VI of EESA);
12. The Bilingual Education Act;
13. The various Indian Education programs; and
14. The Impact Aid program of assistance to schools in Federally-affected areas.

In addition, the legislation:

15. creates a new program for gifted and talented children's education;
16. focuses new resources on dropout prevention, secondary school basic skills improvement, and preschool education; and
17. makes overdue revisions in the Federal education auditing and statistics-gathering processes.

PROPOSED CHANGES UNDER H.R. 5 DIRECTLY IMPACTING YOUTH-AT-RISK, AGE 9 TO 15

Numerous provisions to expand the Chapter 1 program under H.R. 5 would offer greater and improved assistance to economically and educationally disadvantaged 9- to 15-year-olds. H.R. 5 encourages increased funding at the pre-school and secondary levels of schooling. This change acknowledges the need to assist students beyond the primary elementary school years and would provide assistance toward remedial first chance programs for 9- to 15-year-olds, those learning greater mastery of the basic skills. A first chance program is defined as a remedial assistance plan offered to youth during the period of time when difficulty in learning is initially identified.

The secondary basic skills/dropout prevention program proposed in H.R. 5 includes funding for demonstration projects and for implementation grants aimed at effective secondary school basic skills improvement programs and effective dropout prevention and re-entry strategies. Activities to promote dropout prevention include: identification activities; early intervention activities for students at risk; the establishment of social work, mentor, and guidance services; staff training and other services to assist potential dropouts and those who have dropped out. Basic school improvement activities for secondary students include introducing or increasing programs to meet the special needs of at-risk secondary students; initiating remedial programs; developing successful approaches to aid the administration of basic

skills/dropout prevention programs: providing staff training, counseling, and support services; and providing provisions to encourage peer tutoring. The term "secondary school" is defined in a manner which may effect middle and junior high school, depending on particular State law provisions. This proposed program not only acknowledges the problems of youth-at-risk, but in addition, offers the opportunity to address the problems encountered by and needs of this age group, including the potential to aid the 9-to 15-year-old group of at-risk youth. It provides for the needed support of trained teachers, social workers, counselors, and involvement of peers. In addition, this program provides for varying activities which would promote school completion.

The Even Start Program--proposed to combine adult basic education for parents with readiness training for their children in a single program could aid 9- to 15-year-old youth by encouraging parents to provide their children with more at-home educational assistance.

H.R. 5 provides for better targeting. Concentration grants to be targeting areas with high concentrations of poverty are outlined in the bill. This provision offers greater assistance to areas that have a large influx of economically disadvantaged youth, areas that are often characterized as not adequately assisting youth who are academic underachievers.

The School Improvement Act proposes various other changes in the Chapter 1 program to encourage program improvement that could greatly benefit youth, ages 9 to 15. They are in critical need of programs to learn and master the basic skills and gain employment abilities. The following program improvement provisions, as outlined in H.R. 5 would assist in the design and implementation of programs that would aid in aligning youths' achievement with their potential:

- o evaluation and program improvement;
- o innovative projects;
- o more advanced skills;
- o coordination with the regular program;
- o rewarding success; and
- o Federal improvement activities--Secretary's Discretionary Fund.

Further, H.R. 5 contains provisions for the Chapter 1 program to provide greater flexibility to LEA's as they proceed to operate school-wide programs. This change is essential in developing, implementing, and administering coordinated school-wide curriculum throughout school-centered experiences working toward employment-centered experiences. This proposed change acknowledges the developmental continuum across which learning takes place.

H.R 5 would strengthen the parental involvement component of Chapter 1 by encouraging and ensuring the formation of educational partnerships between parents and teachers of Chapter 1 students. Improved parental involvement would assist this population by encouraging better coordination of activities in school, at home and in the community. It would encourage parents to take an active role in their children's educational experiences and would encourage parents to offer direct and indirect contributions in assisting the teachers, demonstrating their expertise in and out of the classroom, assisting youth in seeing the connection between school experiences and eventual employment

options.

H.R. 5 further outlines provisions for the participation of private school children in Chapter 1 programs as follows:

- o timely and meaningful consultation between public and private school officials in the development and administration of Chapter 1 programs;
- o timely resolution of complaints-- to ensure service to deprived students within private school settings; and
- o capital expenses--to financially assist in the service of deprived students in private school settings.

This change allows Federal assistance for youth who receive their education in other than public school settings.

This legislation also contains provisions for special programs assisting many other needs of 9- to 15-year-old at-risk youth. H.R. 5 provides for assistance in the purchasing of books and school library materials to be used by Chapter 1 students, including those youth, ages 9 to 15. Adequate and up to date reading materials are essential for this target population. These types of experiences can impact and expand the options youth identify as opportunities to pursue in both their leisure time and possibly in future employment endeavors.

Provisions for the employment of needed instructional personnel and teacher training opportunities are provided in H.R. 5. In addition this bill includes provision for teachers' planning and evaluation of curricula and students' achievement. It outlines and directs schools to provide for year-round and intensive summer training programs for youth.

Presently, ECIA and other education bills minimally serve the 9- to 15-year-old population of at-risk youth. The suggested changes in the omnibus education bill have the potential to provide greater and more extensive assistance to the 9- to 15-year-olds. Provisions that specify basic skills training; encourage program improvement and coordinated school-wide curricula; target on schools with high concentrations of poverty and on students with greatest need; support increased instructional personnel and provisions to provide training for teachers; provide for summer remedial and dropout prevention programs for youth; and encourage parental involvement all contribute to the resources needed to aid the target population toward improved levels of achievement. However, some of the education issues and problems that affect and are encountered by youth-at-risk need further examination and consideration as Congress proceeds with their efforts toward the reauthorization of the various Federal education bills.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION IN THE REAUTHORIZATION OF FEDERAL EDUCATION BILLS

Key in the transition from school-centered experiences of 9- to 15-year-old youth-at-risk toward successful work-centered experiences is the need for a curriculum that offers a two-fold opportunity. First, these youth need a curriculum that allows and encourages the improvement of basic skill

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development, and second, 9- to 15-year-old youth would benefit best from a curriculum that offers content that is employment relevant. This curriculum would provide youth with information necessary to explore career options and help them develop marketable skills. Career education curricula provisions need to be specifically targeted at this group of youth-at-risk. If provisions are not targeted for this specific group, it leaves to chance the possibility that present resources will be invested elsewhere.

Although provisions are outlined for increased instructional personnel and training of teachers currently employed in school systems, no provisions are suggested that would assist in the reform of pre-service training. Youth-at-risk present multiple challenges to educators. Teachers required to deal with these challenges must be skilled curriculum developers, capable of individualized instruction, able to present curriculum across a broad spectrum of mediums—computers, textbook, other print materials, within simulations—capable of assessing students' progress toward desired objectives and goals. In addition, teachers must be able to address the unique problems that these youth bring to the classroom, specifically drug addiction and teen pregnancy. The needs of youth-at-risk call for teachers prepared to meet these demands in the classroom.

Presently, less than 50 percent of eligible youth are being served overall, with an even lower percent of the eligible 9- to 15-year-old population being served. The greatest remedial assistance offered appears to be targeted toward primary grade youth and secondary youth. The parameters of secondary youth are not explicit. Will provisions be available for only youth in high school—grades 9 through 12? Does secondary youth refer to junior and senior high school? Because age parameters are not identified in the proposed provisions, there is a chance that program administrators will not address youth in middle grades. Concerted effort might be well invested toward a "first chance" dropout prevention program targeted for youth prior to age 16. New provisions should either define secondary education provisions as those available to youth throughout middle school and high school, or designated sets of provisions--one directed toward at-risk youth in the middle grades and an additional set of provisions targeted toward at-risk youth in the secondary grades 9 through 12.

CONCLUSIONS

The consequences of not providing for the needs of at-risk youth, age 9 to 15, are far more severe today than in the past due to rapidly changing labor market demands. The result is devastating to both the individual and to the economy. The credential of a high school diploma has become, at a minimum, a prerequisite for most jobs across the nation. Those who fail to achieve may eventually drop out of school and lower their future earning capacity. It is estimated that dropouts earn one-third less than high school graduates.

The consequential cost to society is manifested in lower per capita income, loss of tax revenues, and a larger demand for social services. As the nation moves toward a period of labor shortages and a declining youth population, all human resources must be utilized to their fullest potential. Programs must be targeted toward youth-at-risk, age 9 to 15, and provide this

target population with the opportunity to achieve to their fullest potential, rather than wait for remediation by job training programs. The future labor market will require the mastery of the basic skills and the ability to apply these skills toward problem-solving situations, in addition to aptitudes that are developed throughout the learning process.

It is essential that youth-at-risk, age 9 to 15, be considered a priority in the design of first-chance programs, primarily those outlined within the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act before the 100th Congress. This would result in the improvement of the employability of this at-risk population thus ensuring a more capable and productive workforce—one able to more effectively cope with the increasing challenges of this country's socio-economic environment.

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